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Update on Water Quality

United States Department of Agriculture

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NAL Establishes Water Quality Information Center

The National Agricultural Library is establishing a Water Quality Information Center (WQIC) this fiscal year. As one component of USDA's coordinated water quality plan, the Center anticipates disseminating information on water quality and is seeking ways to facilitate communication among professionals, organizations, governmental agencies, and the public.

WQIC provides a variety of services, such as assistance in locating information and referrals to other agencies,

organizations, and individuals. Other services are being planned. Because WQIC is in its formative stages, this is an opportune time for other agencies to share their ideas about what kind of information is needed, who needs it, and what format would be most useful. WQIC is especially interested in developing innovative collaborations that will make water quality information more accessible to those who need it. *Contact: Janice C. Kemp, NAL, 301-344-4077.*

Water Quality Conference Planned

USDA, USGS, and EPA are jointly planning a major water quality conference, "Interagency Progress and Perspectives on the President's Water Quality Initiative," for February 6-7, 1991, in Crystal City, VA. Researchers and staff from Federal executive agencies, legislative offices, State agencies, and environmental, conservation, agricultural, and other organizations will be invited.

The conference will initially focus on cooperative water quality research pro-

grams, including various components of the Management Systems Evaluation Area research sites in the Midwest. The second day of the conference will cover USDA's education and technical assistance program, including existing and proposed demonstration projects; discussions of decision aids for researchers, field technicians, and farmers; and data development, assessment, and analysis. *Contact: Charles A. Onstad, ARS, Morris, MN, 612-589-3411.*

OTA Releases Groundwater Report

Despite considerable uncertainty about the full extent and implications of agrichemical contamination of groundwater, it is clearly an issue of public policy. This is the conclusion of the Office of Technology Assessment in a recently released 78-page summary of their report *Beneath the Bottom Line: Agricultural Approaches to Reduce Agrichemical Contamination of Groundwater*. The full report is scheduled for release in August.

The report describes the primary issues of agrichemical contamination of ground-

water, discusses the ways in which agricultural chemicals enter groundwater, and assesses agricultural technologies and management systems that might reduce contamination. It explores policy options for information collection and management as well as for coordination and management of government programs. It also examines incentives, regulations, and education as means for improving water quality. *Contact: Alison Hess, Project Director, Food & Renewable Resources, OTA, (fax) 202-228-6098.*

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